Using photographs to explain visitors’ attachment to the southern Ningaloo coast

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Presentation outline

- What is place attachment?
- Why focus on Ningaloo Marine Park?
- How was it investigated?
- What was found?
- What does it mean?
- How has it influenced further work?
What is place attachment?

- Emotional bond between a person and a place
- Forms over time through increased familiarity
- Shown through:
  - Positive attitude about place
  - Extensive knowledge of an area
  - Frequent, habitual visitation
- Links to understanding on-site behaviour and perceptions of managers

Place attachment in marine settings

- Received little attention in international literature
- Social, people-related concepts poorly developed for marine settings

Predominant Ningaloo research focus:
- Biodiversity and oceanography
- Spatial and temporal distribution of visitors
- Activities and impacts of visitors
Why focusing on Ningaloo?

- Wealth from Oceans human usage study undertaken by Beckley et al. (2010)
- 55% of interviewees (n=1208) had visited previously
- Of these, 44% always stayed in same location
- Suggests high site fidelity
- Remarkable in tourism literature


Landsat Mosaic, Geoscience Australia
Study sites

- 3 study sites in southern section
- Area not as well studied

1. Coral Bay
2. 14 Mile campsite, Warroora Station
3. 3 Mile campsite, Gnaraloo Station

Landsat Mosaic, Geoscience Australia
How was place attachment investigated?

- Photo elicitation – qualitative method
  1. Participants take own photos
  2. Discussed in subsequent interview with researcher
  3. Photographs and interview transcripts analysed for content (what did they photograph, what did they talk about?)

- Intent of photo is to stimulate more in-depth discussion

- Participant more relaxed – focus on photographs
Method used

- 4-28 July 2009 (peak visitation)
- Digital cameras provided to willing participants at each site
- Instructed to take photos of why they like visiting Ningaloo
- Photographs loaded on to laptop for viewing
- Interviews undertaken 2-3 days later
- Participants given CD with photographs
Participants

- 30 participants across 3 sites (theoretical saturation)

Group types:
- Friends: 20%
- Couples: 33%
- Family: 47%

Visitation frequency:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitation Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once per year</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than once per year</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Once every 2 years</td>
<td>7%</td>
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</tbody>
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Origin:

- Perth: 90%
- Regional WA: 10%
- Interstate: 7%
- Overseas: 3%
Photographs

- Total photographs = 207
- Mean / participant = 7
- Range = 3 – 17

What were they of:
1. Physical environment
2. Recreational activities
3. Social situations

- Overall 55% had marine component

Where are all the photos of water-based activities?

![Bar chart showing percentage of photographs by category with marine vs. non-marine components.](chart.png)
Ningaloo Holiday Album
June - July 2009
Physical environment

- Low tide at Coral Bay
- Beautiful wildflowers
- Cliffs at 3 Mile
- Rock pool at high tide
- Shells at low tide
Recreational activities

Snorkelling at Coral Bay

Managed to catch one!

Reading a book, waiting on the surf...

Bocce on the beach
Social situations

Sitting around the campfire

Catching up with mates

Family down at the beach

Jam time
Now for the long drive home
Interviews

- 30 photo-prompted interviews
- Each lasted about an hour
- Types of attachment identified:
  1. Physical environment
  2. Recreational activities
  3. Social ties
  4. Emotional connection
Physical environment

- Ningaloo Reef, marine environment
  - Marine biota (fish, turtles, shells)
  - Cliffs, rocks, reef
  - Changes with the tide

- Isolation, remoteness

- Warm climate
  - Escape from winter to have fun in the sun

Exploring coastline around Coral Bay

3pm fish feeding frenzy
Recreational activities

- Marine and terrestrial activities
  - Fishing, snorkelling, surfing, boating
  - Walking, 4WD
  - Craftwork, bocce

- Many activities in 1 location
  - Activities for parents and children

- Thursday morning craft circle
- Taking out the new boat
- Sunset fishing
Social ties

- Family and friends bonding
  - Time spent together
  - Teaching children new skills

- Making friends at site
  - Come same time each year, see same people
  - Community feel
Emotional connection

- Everybody is happy (even the dog!)
  - Something for everyone to do in one location
  - Don’t have to move
- Work for experience
  - Hard to get there but rewarding when you do
- Enjoy it while it lasts
  - Sense of change, may be last generation to do this

The dog’s enjoying herself!

Camp finally set up!
What does it mean?

- Similar findings to other global terrestrial-based studies
- Illustrates visitors value marine and terrestrial environment in “one” location
- Indicates that it is more than the physical environment that people value
- Social ties and emotional connections play a part in attachment of visitors to places
- Thus, in managing use of marine and coastal environments, need to consider suite of factors
How has it influenced further work?

- Quantitative survey – completed July 2010
  - 370+ people interviewed
  - Tested the 4 identified elements of place attachment
  - Behavioural intentions and potential management actions

- Structural equation modelling
  - Using quantitative survey data to explore relationships between place attachment and behavioural intentions

- Implications for managers
  - Examining influence of place attachment on support for potential management actions
  - Study provides information on people-environment relationships not previously available
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